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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child

Statement submitted by the New Japan Women's Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

* E/CN.6/2007/1.

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Statement

Since its foundation in 1962, the New Japan Women's Association (NJWA) has been working, among others, for the abolition of nuclear weapons, rights of women and children, and solidarity with women around the world for peace. As a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, NJWA has attended UN sponsored World Conferences of Women and Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women.

NJWA joins many other women's organizations around the world in welcoming the report of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment published on November 9, 2006, which recommended the establishment of an independent, stronger women's agency. The new women's entity will be headed by a newly created Under-Secretary-General with higher status, a substantially increased budget and additional staff for its work at global and country levels. NGOs have long pointed out that there is a tremendous gap between the promises made at the UN on women's rights, advancement and empowerment, and their implementation, which has resulted in no substantial changes in reality facing women on the ground. A consolidated women's entity to provide a stronger voice for women at global and local levels will be a big step forward in ensuring every woman on earth de facto equality and rights, not in name only. To make this reality, we call on all United Nations organizations and Member States to demonstrate a strong political will to promote the implementation of the Panel's recommendations.

The 51st Session of the Commission focuses on a thematic issue entitled "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The Beijing Platform for Action recognized that discrimination and violence against girls begin at the earliest stage of life and continue unabated throughout their lives. Given that this remains the reality of the girl child today, the full and effective implementation, with special attention directed to girls, of not only the Beijing Platform for Action and all the outcomes of its follow-up processes, but also of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, is essential.

We call on the government of Japan and all other Member States to make national action programs as early as possible based on sex disaggregated data on the girl child to address their specific needs. It is particularly important to provide human rights based sex education, both for girls and boys, with reproductive health and rights perspectives at home and school, to guarantee equal opportunities in and equal access to education at all levels, to promote educational and occupational choices free of gender based stereotypes, and to take all measures for eliminating from society as a whole stereotyped gender roles, and discriminatory or harmful traditional practices. In eliminating stereotyped gender roles and image, the media has a crucial role to play. To make all these possible, effective legislation and its enforcement, support services including child-focused budget, and awareness raising among the public and training of public officials and other stakeholders are called for.

NJWA draws attention to the fact that girls are most vulnerable to all forms of violence, particularly in armed conflict and war. Without peace, our efforts for eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, as well as for empowering women from early stage of their life, will not bear fruit. In this connection, NJWA underscores the need for the consorted effort for eradicating conflict and war, and urges the United Nations and member states to commit themselves to implementing the Security Council 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and to resolving all disputes through peaceful diplomacy in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

NJWA reiterates its determination and willingness to continue working together with civil society, governments and international organizations including within the United Nations toward a common goal of "gender equality, peace and development".